

REMARKS

Applicants request favorable reconsideration and allowance of the present application in view of the foregoing amendments and the following remarks.

Initially, Applicants note the assertion in the Office Action that they have not filed a certified copy of Japanese priority application 328427/1999. However, a certified copy of that priority document was submitted with a Claim to Priority filed on March 9, 2001. Attached is a copy of the date-stamped postcard showing receipt of the Claim to Priority and priority document by the PTO. Also enclosed is a copy of the Claim to Priority and the cover page and drawings of the priority document (Applicants' representatives do not retain a copy of the entire certified document in their files). Acknowledgment of receipt of the certified priority document is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-30 are pending in the present application. Claims 1, 8, 9, and 24 are the independent claims.

Claims 1, 8, 9, and 24 have been amended. Applicants submit that support for these amendments can be found in the original disclosure, at least for example at page 9, line 12 through page 11, line 10. Therefore, no new matter has been added.

Applicants appreciate the courtesies extended by Examiners Patel and Mariam in granting and conducting a personal interview with Applicants' representative on January 7, 2004. The substance of the interview is set forth below.

Claims 1-4, 6, 8-12, 14-24, and 26-30 were rejected under 35.U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,332, 030 B1 (Manjunath, et al.) in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,168,352 (Naka). Claim 25 was rejected under Section 103 as being unpatentable over Manjunath, et al. and Naka in further combination with U.S. Patent No.

5,652,626 (Kawakami, et al.). Claims 5, 7 and 13 were rejected under Section 103 as being unpatentable over Manjunath, et al. and Naka in further combination with U.S. Patent No. 6,125,201 (Zador). Applicants respectfully traverse these rejections for the reasons discussed below.

As pointed out during the interview, the present invention as recited in the pending independent claims relates to embedding digital watermark information in image data. Conventionally, a digital watermark has been embedded in a gray-scale image by simply regarding the gray-scale image as gray-scale image data and converting the gray level. However, this may result in serious deterioration of the original image.

To address this, the present invention as recited in independent Claim 1 includes, *inter alia*, the features of judging whether inputted image data is gray-scale image data in which each pixel is formed of one component or color image data in which each pixel is formed of a plurality of components, converting the format of gray-scale image data into color image data in which each pixel is formed of a plurality of components, and embedding digital watermark information in part of the components of the color image data obtained by input means or by the converting. With these features, regardless of whether a color image or gray-scale image is input, a digital watermark can be embedded in only part of the components and serious image deterioration can be avoided for a gray-scale image. Applicants submit that the cited art fails to disclose or suggest at least these features.

In particular, Applicants submit that the cited art fails to disclose or suggest at least the feature of converting gray-scale image data into color image data, as recited in Claim 1. As discussed during the personal interview, Applicants understand Manjunath, et

al., to disclose a method for digital watermarking (or data hiding) that employs a discrete wavelet transform. The disclosed method can be used for embedding information in gray-scale images (Example 2) or color images (Example 3). Naka, et al., on the other hand, discloses a coloring device for performing adaptive coloring of a monochromatic image. In particular, that patent discloses a device that can generate a color image from a monochromatic photograph. Col. 1, lines 8-15. Applicants submit that there is no motivation to modify the system of Manjunath et al. to convert gray-scale image data to color image data, because the watermarking technique disclosed in that patent can be applied equally to gray-scale or color images. In addition, Applicants submit that Naka, et al. does not relate at all to embedding digital watermarks and that one skilled in the art would not even look to that patent to modify the watermarking method disclosed in Manjunath, et al.

Further, Applicants submit that the cited art fails to disclose or suggest at least the feature of judging whether input image data is gray-scale image data or color image data, as also recited in Claim 1. There is no mention or suggestion in any of the cited art to perform such a judgment.

Accordingly, Applicants submit that the present invention recited in Claim 1 is patentable over the cited art, even if that art is considered in combination (assuming such a combination were permissible). Independent Claims 8, 9, and 24 recite similar features and are believed to be patentable for at least the same reasons as Claim 1.

The dependent claims are patentable for at least the same reasons as the independent claims, as well as for the additional features they recite.

In view of the foregoing, Applicants submit that all pending claims are patentable over the cited art. The Examiners indicated during the personal interview that the outstanding rejections would be withdrawn in view of these amendments, and Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of those rejections.

For the foregoing reasons, Applicants submit that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and an early Notice of Allowance are requested.

Applicants' undersigned attorney may be reached in our Washington, DC office by telephone at (202) 530-1010. All correspondence should continue to be directed to our below-listed address.

Respectfully submitted,



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